What is claimed is:

1. A method for producing a cell line permissive for hepatitis C virus (HCV) replication comprising

(a) culturing cells infected with HCV;

(b) curing said cells of (a) of HCV; and

(c) identifying a subline of said cured cells of (b) that is permissive for HCV replication.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said curing step of (b) comprises subjecting said infected cells of (a) to treatment with an antiviral agent.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said antiviral agent is an antiviral cytokine.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said cells of (a) are vertebrate cells.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said vertebrate cells are human cells.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said cells of (a) are hepatocyte cells.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said hepatocyte cells are human hepatocyte cells.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said subline of (c) supports HCV replication at a frequency of at least 30%.

10. A method for producing a cell line permissive for HCV replication, the method comprising

(a) providing a cell line that comprises a replicating genomic or subgenomic HCV RNA

(b) curing said cell line of (a) of HCV RNA

(c) identifying sublines of said cured cell line of (b) that are permissive for HCV replication.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said curing of step (b) comprises treatment with an antiviral agent.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said agent is an antiviral cytokine.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.

14. The method of claim 10 wherein said cell line of (a) comprises a replicating subgenomic HCV RNA containing no adaptive mutations.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein said cell line of (a) comprises a replicating subgenomic HCV RNA that comprises an adaptive mutation.

16. A cell line that is permissive for HCV replication, wherein said cell line is produced by curing a host cell line infected with HCV and then selecting cured sublines that are permissive for HCV replication.

17. A cell line according to claim 16, wherein said curing comprises treating said host cell line with interferon.

18. A cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication, wherein said cell line has been cured of HCV RNA by treatment with interferon.

19. A method for producing a cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication, the method comprising

(a) transfecting host cells with replicating HCV RNA

(b) subjecting said host cells to conditions that cure said host cells of HCV RNA

(c) selecting cured cell populations of (b)

(d) growing the selected cured cell populations of (c) to generate a cell line that is permissive for HCV RNA replication.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein said HCV RNA of step (a) is subgenomic HCV RNA.

21. The method according to claim 19, wherein step (b) comprises treating said host cells with an antiviral agent.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said antiviral agent is an antiviral cytokine.

23. The method according to claim 21, wherein said antiviral cytokine is interferon.

24. The method of claim 21, wherein said interferon is interferon-α.

25. The method according to claim 19, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of between about 10% and about 75%.

26. The method according to claim 25, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of between about 10% and about 30%.

27. The method according to claim 25, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of at least 30%.

28. The method according to claim 27, wherein said cell line of (d) supports HCV RNA replication at a frequency of at least 50%.

29. The method according to claim 19, wherein said host cell is a vertebrate cell.

30. The method according to claim 29, wherein said host cell is a human cell.

31. The method according to claim 29, wherein said host cell is a hepatocyte cell.

32. The method according to claim 30, wherein said host cell is a human cell.

33. A cell line produced by the method of claim 19.

34. A cell line according to claim 33, wherein said host cell contains subgenomic HCV RNA.

35. A cell line according to claim 34, wherein said subgenomic HCV RNA comprises an adaptive mutation.

36. The cell line of claim 35, wherein said adaptive mutation is S2204I, said position being identified by alignment with the genotype 1b Con1 full-length HCV genome (Genbank Accession no. AJ238799) commencing with the core-coding region.

37. A cell line produced by the method of claim 1.

38. A cell line produced by the method of claim 10.